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Guest Curator: Garth Clark

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Bettina Speckner *Brooch*, 2010. Photo in Enamel, Silver.

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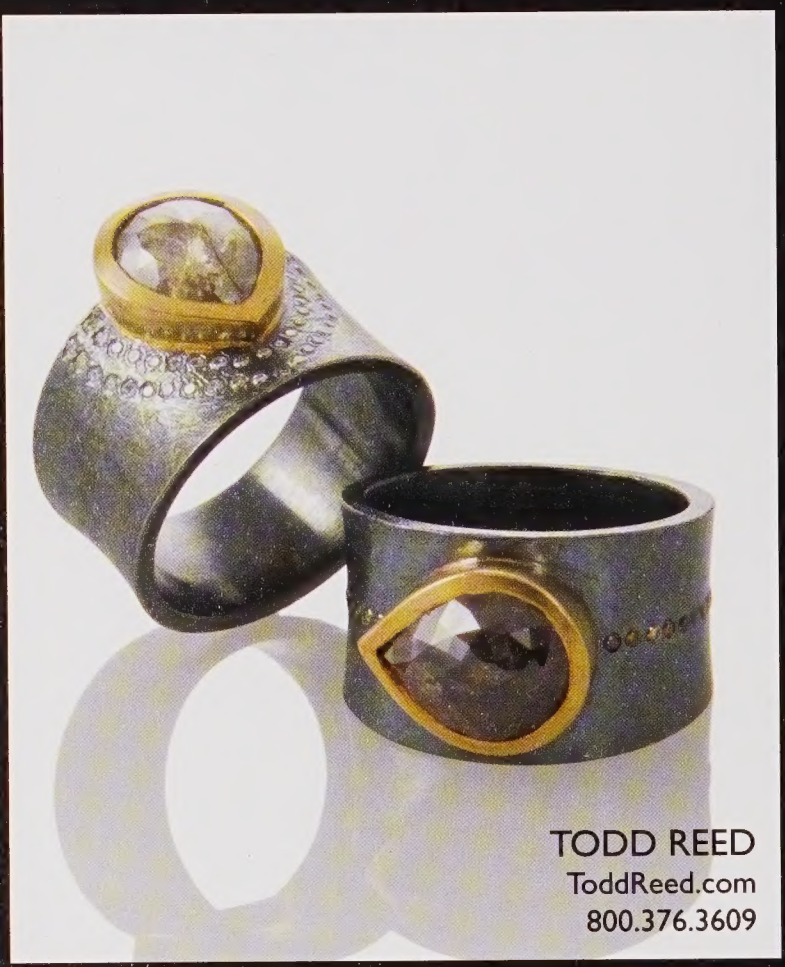

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6 Foreword

10 Neo-Palatial:
A Curatorial Imaginarium
GARTH CLARK

38 Shana Astrachan
26 Jeffrey Clancy
58 Kim Cridler
22 Wim Delvoye
18 Michele Oka Doner
46 Elliot Gaskin
24 Guido Geelen
36 Jill Baker Gower
20 Julie Heffernan
20 Timothy Horn
44 Chris Irick
32 Hendrik Kerstens
42 Anya Kivarkis
60 Jeff Koons
48 Asagi Maeda
28 Tom Muir
54 Tomek Ogrodowski
50 emiko oye
52 Marie Pendaries
34 Anika Smulovitz
40 Rebecca Strzelec
30 Amelia Toelke
14 Xavier Veilhan

Curated Exhibition in Print 2010

GUEST CURATOR: GARTH CLARK

Cover: TIMOTHY HORN
Sweet Thing, 2008
nickel-plated bronze,
mirrored blown glass
60 x 36 x 9"
COLLECTION OF THE DE YOUNG
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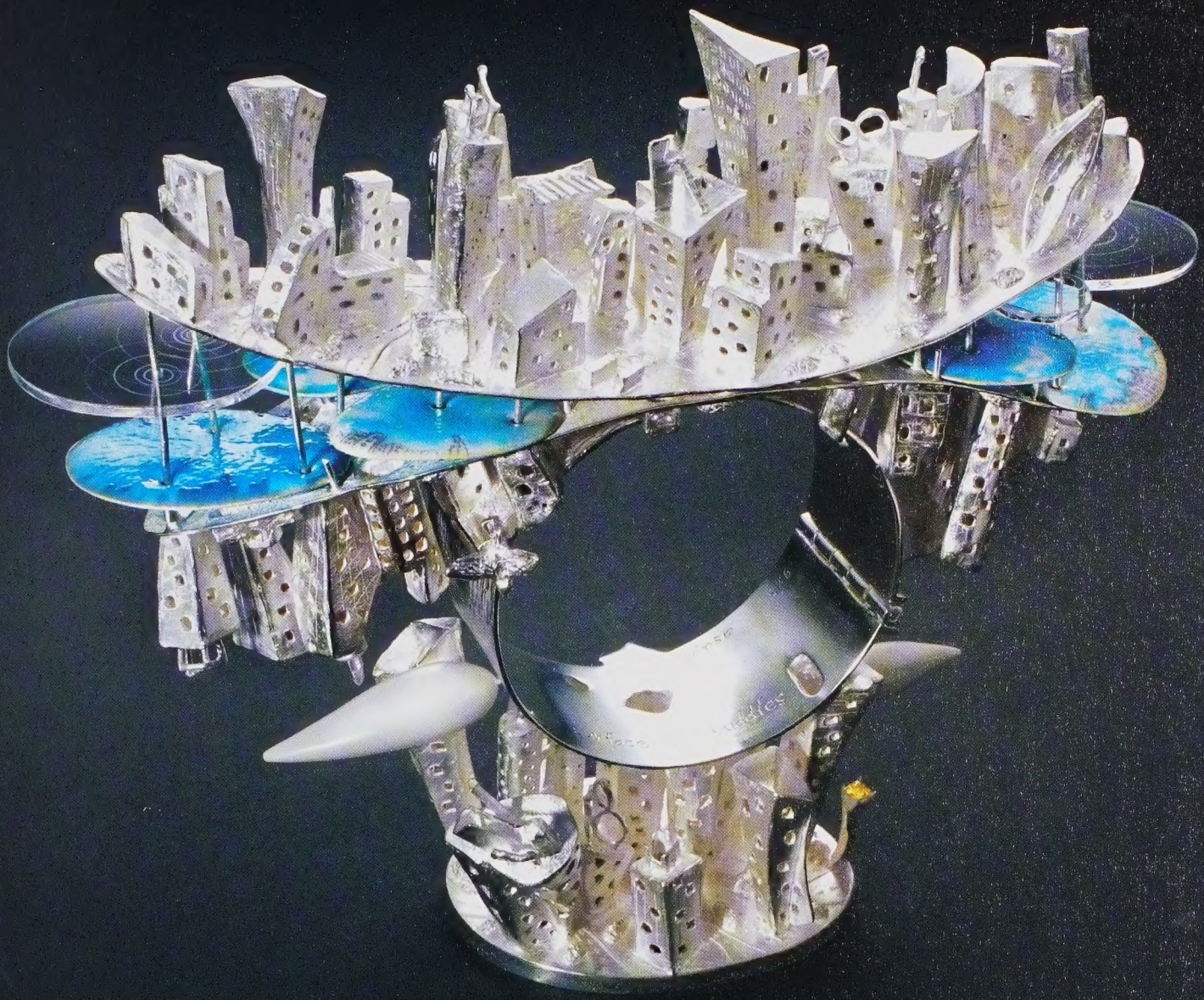
ASAGI MAEDA



"Dreams on the Surfaces of Puddles"
Bracelet.
Sterling silver, enamel on fine silver,
acrylic glass, avonite, yellow beryl.

Disappointed, walking with your head down
The blue sky after the rain is reflected in a puddle

Looking up, the sky is graceful and invigorating
The air is clean, feel the warmth of the sun...

Puddles reflect anonymous stories
A scene of kids playing with laughter in the background

Sometimes ripples shake the images
When it is still again, your smile might be on the surface

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FOREWORD

INAUGURATED IN 1994, *Metalsmith*'s annual "Exhibition in Print" (EiP) was intended to expand critical coverage of the rich metals field. This year's guest curator, Garth Clark, fulfilled this aim with his "curatorial imaginarium," which offers a grand tour of the palatial mode in contemporary art. Throughout history, palace culture has been marked by lavishness, if not pomposity. Such extravagance is fittingly on display in this selection of recent works. Of course, monumental splendor comes at a price—financial and human. And therein lies the rub. Although millions of visitors flock to palaces to gawk and gape at the opulence, it is rarely without a tinge of unease. We can't seem to enjoy our gilt without guilt.

Among the ripe ideas that Clark explores, perhaps the most compelling concerns the link between aesthetics and ethics, pleasure and politics. While many of the artists here are actively involved with social and ecological issues, they nonetheless allow themselves to indulge in the artistic excess of past regimes. They revel in the lap of luxury, only to critique or parody such conditions. These artists seem to want to have their cake and spew it too. As Clark states, "No matter how socially activist our views are, we are all complex, with conflicting love-hate relationships with privilege. Even in denouncing it there is a latent smudge of envy and desire."

Clark further muses about the possibility of removing oneself from the moral taint of a historical style, and if enlisting an aesthetic entails complicity in its politics. It is admittedly a hard case to make, but one could argue that art may, indeed, be exempt from moral claims. This view was upheld by Oscar Wilde, who declared, "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all." Clark seconds this motion by citing film critic Pauline Kael as saying "Art is amoral;" it follows its nose wherever that may lead, to the tower or the pew.

While the jury may be out on the union of ethics and aesthetics, there is no doubt about the sumptuousness found on these pages. So I urge you to enjoy without reservation, and to again heed the assuring words of Wilde: "Pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval...."

SUZANNE RAMLJAK
EDITOR

The mission of *Metalsmith* magazine is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalsmithing. In fulfillment of the goal of producing a significant document of the field, editorial content will emphasize contemporary activities and ideas, with supportive content to include relevant historical work and critical issues.

metalsmith

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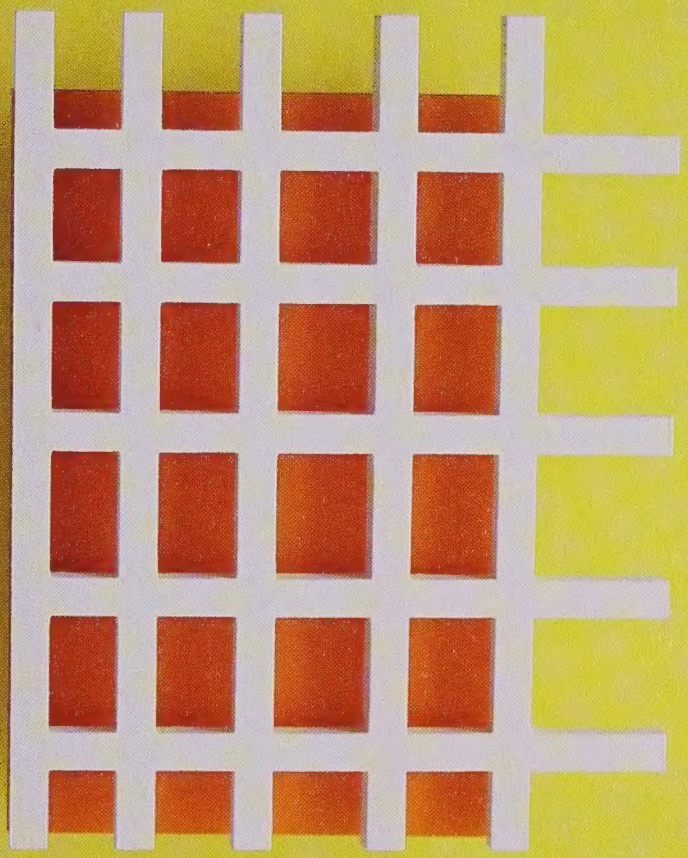

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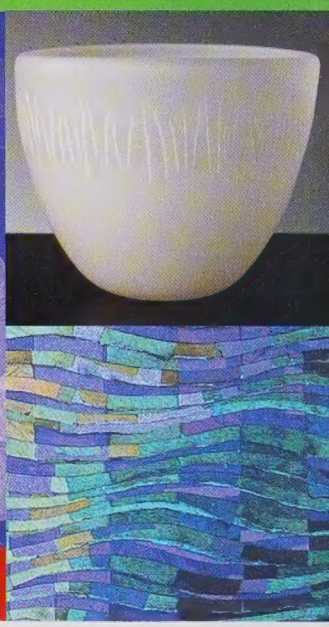

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Aaron Faber Gallery, New York, presents *Creating a Legacy: the European Tradition and Studio Jewelry*, an exhibition and lecture at SOFA CHICAGO. The lecture, Friday, November 5 at 11am, will include an overview of the masters' work by craft historian Sue Barry; apprentices' presentations of their work; and a panel discussion.

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Neo-Palatial
A Curatorial Imaginarium

BY GARTH CLARK

Place

Three centuries ago the mobs attacked the Palace of Versailles in France, tearing down and destroying the magnificent baroque entrance gates designed by Louis XIV's architect, Jules Hardouin-Mansart. In 2008, at a cost of $8 million, the gates were replicated after much patient research, using archival drawings and a little contemporary invention. These gates, radiant with virginal gold, are the perfect entry point for this printed exhibition. We will start here, not only because they are palatial, and a masterpiece of the blacksmith's art, a little "neo" in their own right, but because they give a sense of place.

Exhibitions are tied to venues. Without the *mise-en-scène* of a physical setting this "Exhibition in Print" would be just a lengthy article and not an exposition. Therefore, I have chosen to invent a small eighteenth-century palace that was once occupied by a minor prince. It is located somewhere in Europe; the actual country and town is not important. Fortunes ebbed and flowed, leaving this neighborhood run down and given over to small industry, with sooty brick factory buildings. Somehow the palace avoided the fate of being converted into a factory. It remains empty, stripped of anything of worth, but is still structurally intact.

The high exterior walls are covered with graffiti, and like the ugly, featureless steel gate, are surmounted by razor wire to deter intruders. The palace has been reduced to its fundamental structure: white cubes and rectangles of pleasing proportions with faint remnants of rococo ornamentation peeking out from countless coats of paint. Traces of its past remain: a fireplace here, ceiling moldings there, the dilapidated but once grand patterned marble floors and other ghostly hints of an aristocratic life formerly celebrated within these walls.

Inside are named rooms in which the exhibition is installed: the Vestibule of Keys, the Flicker Hall, the Treasury, the Gothic Tower, the Dining Hall and Service Vault, the Gallery of Adornment, and the Versailles Room. What follows is a guided tour through my imaginarium, an examination of the objects that the rooms contain, discussing their makers and how they are displayed. I have eschewed an academic structure for a more conversational tone, using the first person to lend the intimacy of a more direct voice.

Theme

Politically, public attitude towards palace culture has radically transformed in the short span of three years. Until the recent collapse of the global economy, corporate aristocrats were viewed enviously as the Capitalist dream, their lifestyles closely followed and emulated. They were allowed to play, with little criticism of their excesses and elephantine compensation. Employment levels were high and enough wealth trickled down to keep the serfs content. The palace was not yet an explosive political issue.

Now in the developed nations (including America) at least one in six breadwinners is jobless while unemployment for the palace folk is only three percent. Inequity in wealth distribution has steadily grown. While our palace is theoretically in Europe, most of the work shown here is from America, where the top one percent own nearly fifty percent of all private assets, while the top twenty own eighty-five percent. The top five percent have seen their wealth grow fivefold in twenty-five years, while that of the middle class has steadily declined. Fifty years ago a CEO earned a salary forty times that of their workforce's average wage; today it is four hundred times greater. The egregious manipulation of toxic assets has resulted in a massive number of foreclosures, destroyed retirement plans, and decimated savings. This class has become, for the first time in decades, the target of populist dissatisfaction and anger.

Given this climate, why celebrate the palace now? This is the ideal moment to parody and critique the religion of ultra-materialism, a perfect storm in fact. With this in mind I have selected work that is eccentric, often deliberately vulgar and with an overall aura of wit and wickedness that

Gates to the Versailles Palace, recreated and installed, 2008
PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

JULIE HEFFERNAN
Self-Portrait as Everything that Rises, 2003
oil on canvas
78 x 82"
COURTESY PPOW, NEW YORK

Why celebrate the palace now? This is the ideal moment to parody and critique the religion of ultra-materialism, a perfect storm in fact.

delights in the faux opulence of fabricated glamour. But a warning to those with more traditional taste: this palace is much more Lady Gaga than Lady Diana.

The eighteenth century was the *belle époque* of exaggerated style, a time when the standards for craftsmanship, luxury, and invention were unparalleled and devotion to fashion was paramount. For the contemporary maker seeking to comment on his or her own time, the detritus of this *ancien régime* is a magical resource. History is wont to repeat itself; these two gilded ages are squinting uncertainly at each other. But do not expect a tidy *dénouement*. No matter how socially activist our views are, we are all complex, with conflicting love-hate relationships with privilege. Even in denouncing it there is a latent smudge of envy and desire.

Selection

This exhibition features two types of artists: eight "muses" who were invited (Jeff Koons, Wim Delvoye, Guido Geelen, Timothy Horn, Michele Oka Doner, Xavier Veilhan, Hendrik Kerstens, and Julie Heffernan), and metalsmiths whose work was selected from hundreds of email submissions to a SNAG-posted solicitation. The muses each bring exciting perspectives and counterpoints to this exhibition, different to those offered by the chosen metalsmiths. Initially my mandate was "anything but jewelry." I looked for gates, large ornamental vases, serving dishes, objects of curiosity, chalices, and candelabras. But few submissions matched my vision of a twenty-first-century Pop palace parody. With rare exceptions the works were prosaic and unexciting. Jewelry, which I had initially decided to exclude, proved a revelation. Here I found just the right balance between style and content, exactly what I imagined for this show. And so the prohibition was lifted and jewelry was in. Biographies were ignored until after the artist had been selected. That way I had no prior knowledge of professional standing, educational background, nationality, age, or sometimes even gender. The process was blind to everything but visual evidence.

The Tour

Now, accompany me past the steel doors and into the palace's walled courtyard, where we are greeted by an epic metal sculpture by French sculptor Xavier Veilhan, photographed in the Courtyard of Honor at Versailles. It is part of an ongoing and controversial contemporary art project that places new palace art into this venerable old setting. Veilhan's sculpture of horses and carriage has a dark presence; its cubistic forms are sharp, blunt, and brutal. Veilhan has created a sense of velocity with line and distortion of shape, as though the piece is passing through a time warp (and indeed it is). The carriage hurtles like a comet towards the unhappy fate awaiting its passengers, referring to October 6, 1789, when the mob took the king, queen, and their children to Paris on their last ride in the royal carriage.

Garth Clark *is a writer, historian, and lecturer, and has been an art dealer for the past three decades. Clark has written, edited and contributed to over fifty books and is author of more than two hundred essays and articles. For his contributions to modern and contemporary ceramics he has received numerous honors, among them the 2004 College Art Association's Mather Award for distinguished achievement in art criticism. Clark has also curated many significant museum exhibitions for such venues as the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

The commissioned curator for this year's Exhibition in Print was made possible through the generous support of the Rotasa Foundation.

XAVIER VEILHAN
Le Corrosse, 2009
Installed in the courtyard of
Honor at Versailles
welded sheet steel, acrylic paint
approximately 9 x 50 x 6 feet
COURTESY GERING AND LOPEZ, NEW YORK
PHOTO: FLORIAN KLEINEFENN

A TOUTES LES GLOIRES DE LA FRANCE.

Vestibule of Keys

ANIKA SMULOVITZ
Dandelion Key, 2002
sterling silver
5 x 2 ⅛ x 2 ⅛"
PHOTO: JIM WILDEMAN

LET'S WALK OVER the still extant cobblestones and enter the palace itself. The entry hall is dark and cool, thanks to its high ceilings. Projected on the largest wall is a video of the Versailles gates, slowly and endlessly opening and closing. The walls, poorly plastered and patched, provide a texture of decay as a counterpart to the pristine gates. Then we walk past the video installation through an arch and into the Vestibule of Keys, a small windowless room. A palace is all about keys. It is the way in which access is controlled, wealth and privacy protected, and status established. Keys are used to lock away treasure and to keep the silverware out of the hands of felonious servants. Keys keep the wine cellar out of bounds, lock the caddies that hold tea (then costing around $300 a pound), and determine which wings and rooms one is allowed to access. The vestibule contains hundreds of keys, big and small, one more fanciful and elaborate than the other. Each one has its own narrative and purpose, and each denotes a privilege and responsibility. "When you hold a key," artist Anika Smulovitz says, "you hold power. In many cultures, traditionally in Scandinavia and today in Nepal, keys are displayed on the body like jewelry to show status."

ANIKA SMULOVITZ
Loss and Longing I, 2001
sterling silver
5 x 5 x ¼"
PHOTO: JIM WILDEMAN

A palace is all about keys. It is the way in which access is controlled, wealth and privacy protected, and status established.

Flicker Hall

FROM THE VESTIBULE we enter the main exhibition by touching the outline of an oversized key etched into a glass door. The door slides open with a hydraulic hiss, allowing us into the ballroom, or Flicker Hall, as I have named it. The room is dark. The glass panes in the windows, which are placed high, have been painted black against their white frames. The only object in the room is *Burning Bush*, Michele Oka Doner's ten-foot-long candelabra molded from a giant root system of a tree that had washed up during a flood. It is aglow with scores of candles. A bewigged page dressed in palace uniform is in attendance. He wheels an antique tea trolley with actual eighteenth-century paraphernalia used for candle husbandry, carefully arrayed on a white cloth like surgical instruments. Throughout the day he replaces candles, trims their wicks, and removes excess wax. Enlisting an elegant silver snuffer, he extinguishes their flames and afterwards uses a wax taper to relight them. It is as much about the performance as the object.

MICHELE OKA DONER
Burning Bush, 2002–03
bronze
69 x 112 x 77"
COURTESY MARLBOROUGH GALLERY, NEW YORK

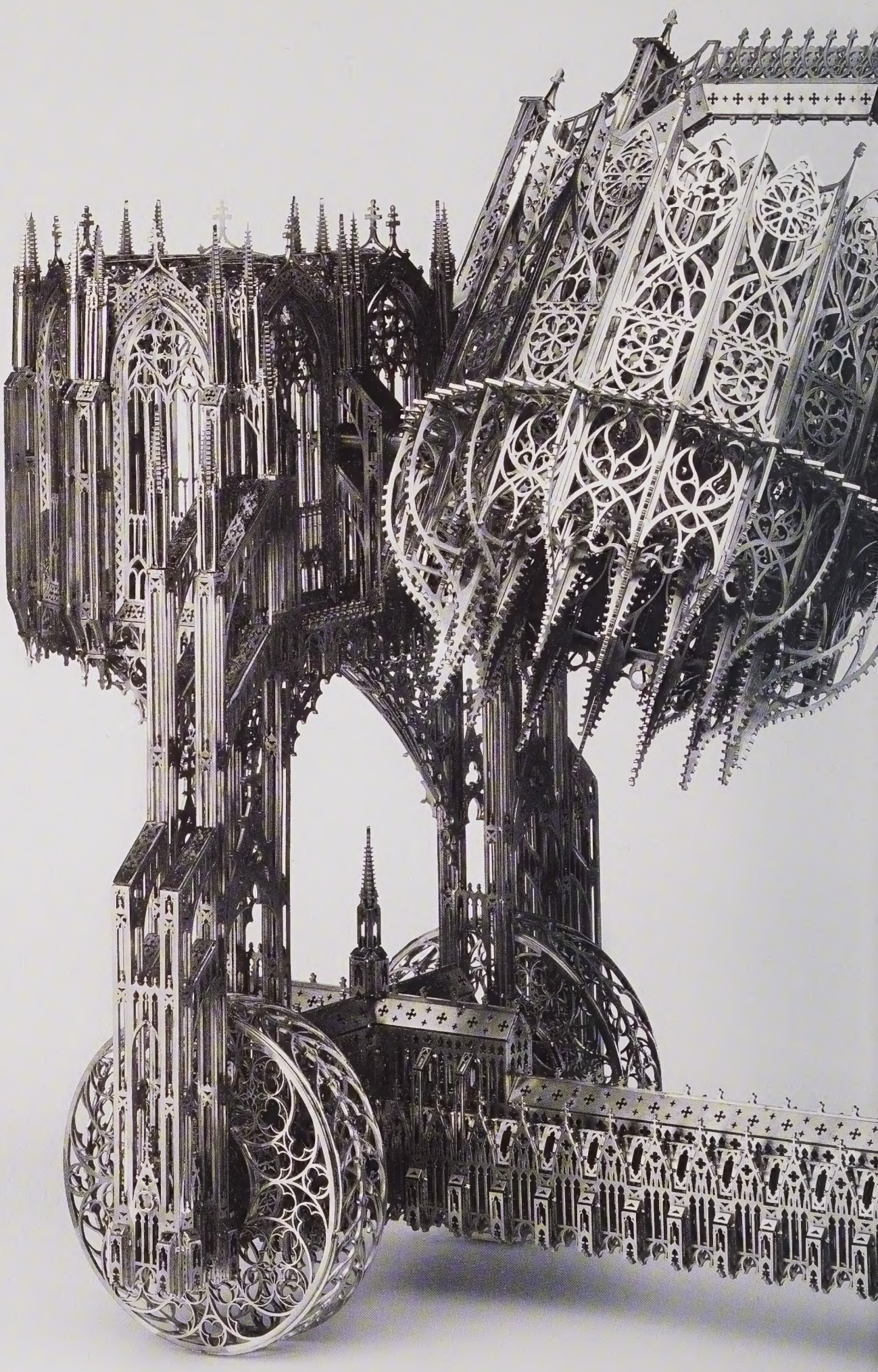
Treasury

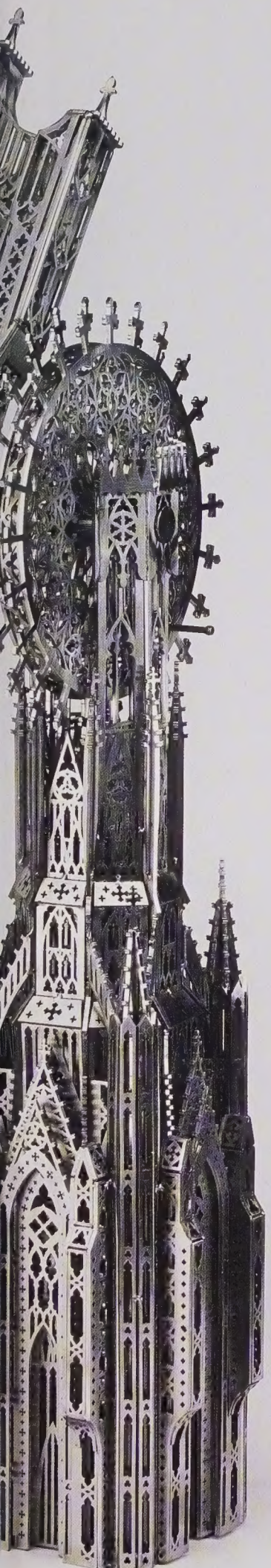
A DOORWAY JUST OFF the ballroom is brightly lit and leads to a stairway that takes us to the cellar. There we find a large vault with a massive, heavy oak door banded in steel and studded with multiple locks and bolts. The door is ajar and we enter the Treasury, once a place to guard valuable objects. The floor is stone, the ceiling barrel vaulted, the room eerily silent. Inside we find the distinctive jewelry-themed sculptures of Timothy Horn. They are installed on the wall, each four to five feet in length, lit by powerful narrow-beam spotlights that are set invisibly into the ceiling.

Two are illustrated here; both are departures from Horn's most recent approach. Horn had long wanted to make works that combined painting with sculpture, but he is colorblind and his attempts at the easel were, in his own words, "disastrous." A collaboration with painter Julie Heffernan brings a delectable decadence to Horn's work; her scenes are often set in eighteenth-century palace interiors, or play on the period's history, as in their *Self Portrait as Peter the Great*.

JULIE HEFFERNAN
AND TIMOTHY HORN
Self Portrait as Peter the Great, 2010
nickel-plated bronze,
oil on linen
28 x 20 x 5"
COURTESY PPOW, NEW YORK

TIMOTHY HORN
Tree of Heaven, 2010
mirrored blown glass,
nickel-plated bronze
74 x 46 x 6"





Gothic Tower

STILL IN THE cellar, we pass though a doorway that at one time was a secret entrance. A short tunnel leads us to the Gothic Tower, a folly situated in the palace grounds. Follies are architectural conceits popular in French and English gardens in the eighteenth century. They had no real purpose aside from being decorative oddities. History was a popular theme, such as carefully built ruined abbeys, Egyptian pyramids, Chinese pagoda temples, and Roman bathhouses. Ironically, some follies were borrowed from the lower rural classes: cottages, mill houses, and even entire rustic villages, so the Marie Antoinettes of that world could play at being a shepherdess, milkmaid, or peasant.

In the tower we find the art of Wim Delvoye, a Belgian sculptor who engages provocative conceptual themes: art tattooed on live pigs, marble floors recreated in meat, and machines that produce feces. Delvoye has worked extensively in metal; with found objects, finely engineered machines, cast iron and bronze, and laser cut steel. The palace, or more specifically its predecessor, the Gothic castle, fascinates him. In his early career he painted gas canisters as though they were large antique Delft vases, turned ironing boards into heraldic shields, and created cabinets housing collections of circular saw blades, enameled in blue and white with images of seventeenth-century craftspeople at work.

Delvoye's Gothic-styled working vehicles and construction equipment are often fabricated to life size, including caterpillar earthmovers, dump trucks, and even a flatbed trailer rig 73 feet in length. The cement mixer is held up on either side by Gothic towers, with their pointed arches or lancet forms, the height-enhancing device of this Romanesque-inspired architectural style. The laser-cut decoration is as complex as a Bach fugue and as dazzlingly virtuosic. But its aesthetic power comes from crossing lines of time and class, bringing the extravagant decorative style of kings and popes to an unlikely subject, a twentieth-century piece of artisanal equipment transformed from banal functionality into visual glory.

WIM DELVOYE
Cement Truck Scale Model 1:6, 2009
laser-cut stainless steel
24 ½ x 59 x 17 ⅜"

Dining Hall and Service Vault

GUIDO GEELEN
Vanitas Skulls, 2006
gold glazed ceramic
installation at the Frans
Hals Museum, Haarlem,
The Netherlands

WE MOVE ON to the main palace, through the ballroom and into the dining hall, where there is a Dutch Golden Age portrait on the wall and a large sculpture by Guido Geelen set out on a baronial table. This room offers an instructive contrast between a Calvinist and Catholic nation. Great wealth exists in both cases, but in Holland it was expressed with austerity. Puritanical aristocrats in the painting look on, faintly alarmed by the table with its ceramic objects in the brightest of gold glazes. Geelen has arrayed an ox head, deer antlers, a pig's head, and a haunch of meat. A vase made from corn cobs contains flowers. The glaze has superficial glamour, but the ghoulish subject and its visceral rendering contests this quality; fascinatingly it is seductive and repulsive at the same time.

Today we are totally removed from the gory realities of the food chain; slaughtering takes place outside our purview. But 300 years ago, animals were slaughtered on the palace grounds, their cries clearly audible, the scent of fresh blood in the air. Serving dishes were traditionally decorated to connect the meal to its source, such as a fish-shaped tureen for bouillabaisse. A stew of wild boar would similarly be served in a tureen with the beast's tusked head as its form, not only to contain the soup but to also celebrate the hunter's prowess. Interestingly, the urn is a form that seems to have disappeared from the hollowware tradition.

The dining hall abuts the Service Vault, which in turn connects to the kitchen. The vault is where costly serving vessels, gold and silver flatware, expensive porcelain dinnerware (in a Dutch palace this would be specially commissioned Chinese blue and white porcelain bearing the family's coat of arms) and indeed Geelen's centerpiece would be kept under lock and key. This room, once a scullery, has little charm. The floor is of rough, worn tile and multiple water pipes from generations of upgrades weave a tubular web across the ceiling. One wall is covered in cabinets, a little worse for wear. The doors have been replaced with new ones, made out of two-inch-thick Plexiglas so the contents can be seen, but bolted into place. This characterless environment is in fact a perfect counterpoint for the refinement of the serving works on display.

This room offers an instructive contrast between a Calvinist and Catholic nation. Great wealth exists in both cases, but in Holland it was expressed with austerity.

JEFFREY CLANCY

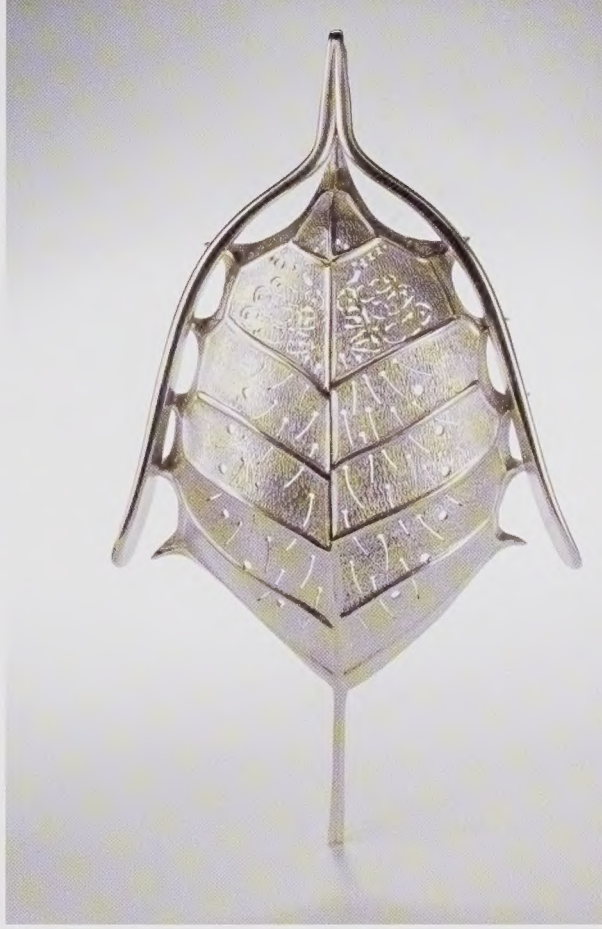
JEFFREY CLANCY
Bread For All, 2003
silver, cardboard, paper
12 x 11 x 9 ½"

Clancy's "Ornamentalware" series, to which *Bread for All* belongs, is a sophisticated blend of utility, fragments of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ornament, and a skeletal, open modernist understructure; a deconstruction of past conventions. In this new body of work, Clancy explores progress and regress and the mobility between. Clancy's appreciation of the history of metalsmithing and mechanical abilities melds with his"desire to contribute, invent, and move the language and lineage of the craft forward." I found this piece appealing because of its callous "let them eat cake" resonance (Marie Antoinette's infamous riposte to the starving poor). There is something disturbingly patronizing and dissonant in "bread for all" being served from a cardboard box with a beautifully crafted ornamental silver handle. This is finely tuned social commentary with a dash of sardonic acid.

Bread for All, 2003 (detail)

UP
6 Packs
UP

TOM MUIR
Twin Risers Teapot, 2007
sterling silver
8 ½ x 4 x 14 ½"



TOM MUIR
Intimate Symmetry with Dog-Sucking Louse (tea strainer), 2006
sterling silver
5 1/8 x 2 7/8 x 1"

TOM MUIR

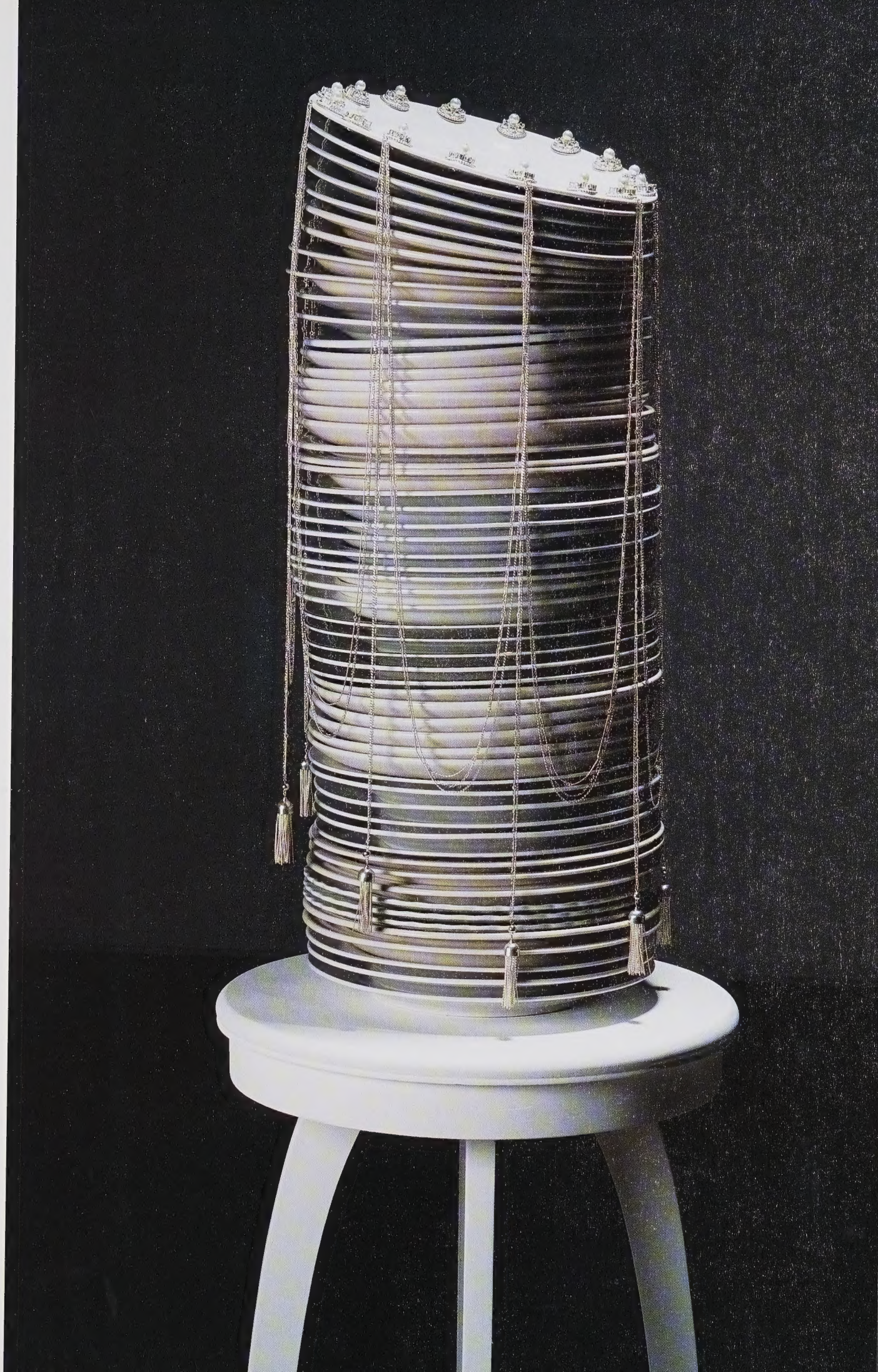
Muir's meter tilts more towards Di than Gaga. He represents a certain exquisiteness of taste that is without parody, but not lacking in content. The fully functional *Twin Risers Teapot* is a technical tour de force, integrating opposing elements, both live and inorganic; it juxtaposes stylized waterfowl, a cityscape, the human torso, and industrial towers. Muir writes that the goal was to have "the city transformed into the bird that can navigate in water and air, and/or the bird transformed into the city that navigates through human, narrative time." *Intimate Symmetry with Dog-Sucking Louse* is a curious conflation of function and subject, a tea-straining louse with a chicken's wishbone for a handle. But the result is an object of delicacy and haunting beauty that reflects the artist's deep commitment to the shrinking tradition of hollowware.

AMELIA TOELKE

Generally student work was not considered for this exhibition, but a happy exception was made for Amelia Toelke's plates. They make a great and fanciful addition to the Service Vault. The plate has recently become Toelke's canvas, which she chose because it "plays multiple roles: utilitarian for the food we eat, it is decorative when it adorns walls, commemorative when it celebrates events and places. It is a keeper of memories as an heirloom or souvenir. The stack of plates feels precarious and unsafe but at the same time this gesture feels familiar. *Tower* is both rising and falling. It embodies the complicated layers of emotion and experience...beauty, desire, social class, belonging, longing, sadness, and pride."

AMELIA TOELKE
Tower, 2009
found plates, sterling, fake pearls, fake crystals, table
15 x 15 x 48"
PHOTOS: JIM ESCALANTE

Tower, 2009
(detail)



Gallery of Adornment

HENDRIK KERSTENS
Bag, 2007
C-print
59 x 47 ¼"

THE GALLERY OF ADORNMENT is a wide passageway of medium length that joined the family's private wing to the rest of the palace. It has no windows and the ceiling has faint remnants of what was once an ornate painting illustrating cherubs in heaven. For the exhibition, the room has been plushly carpeted to create a silent and sartorial viewing space. A handsome and narrow glass-encased cabinet containing jewelry runs the length of the gallery, lined with synthetic velvet in a neutral beige color. A strip of lighting is suspended about seven feet from the ground. It contains small, exposed spotlights angled to make the jewelry seem as glamorous and expensive as possible, less DIY and more Van Cleef and Arpels in presentation. Everything about the display of this work is designed to heighten a sense of preciousness and value that, at least in terms of costly materials, does not actually exist.

A photograph by Hendrik Kerstens, the muse for this gallery, sets the tone of contemporary transformation of court dress. He specializes in tronies (a common type of Baroque painting focused on the facial expression). Self-taught, Kerstens was little known outside Holland until 2008, when he won second place in London's National Portrait Gallery's Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize, at which point his winning image, displayed here, went viral, gracing the covers of at least half a dozen major art magazines.

In his portraits his model, daughter Paula, is always depicted as austere and serene, illuminated with a characteristically Dutch light that Vermeer was able to capture so subtly. Kerstens's *Bag* was conceived in New York, where he noticed the excessive amount of plastic bags given away in shops. As a humorous reaction to this environmental problem, he photographed a plastic bag in the style of a seventeenth-century cap. It is this clash between modernity and history that empowers much of the jewelry in this gallery.

Everything about the display of this work is designed to heighten a sense of preciousness and value that, at least in terms of costly materials, does not actually exist.

ANIKA SMULOVITZ
White Collar 9, 2004
Altered men's white shirt collars
size 16 ½
PHOTO: TOM MCINVAILLE

ANIKA SMULOVITZ

Anika Smulovitz's work (including the dandelion key seen earlier) draws deeply from the rich history of metals and jewelry, seeking discourse between past material cultures and contemporary society. Her current research is focused on the non-neutrality of materials, the concept of aura, issues of adornment and the body. Power is the subject of both her "Key" and "White Collar" series. Collared shirts are the staple of the socially acceptable, upper-class male uniform, Smulovitz explains, "and a socially charged form of adornment. The collars explore the gray area between textiles and jewelry; they investigate what is acceptable versus what is taboo. Why do detached white collars, an essential component of the Playboy Bunny costume, evoke both female power and misogynistic male dominance?" She places it on the neck of women, not to gender-bend, but as a provocation that challenges male dominance. Simultaneously channeling the past, this work is inspired by the elaborate collars worn by ladies of the Elizabethan court, a witty counterpoint to Kerstens's neo-Vermeer photography.

ANIKA SMULOVITZ
White Collar 4, 2005
Altered men's white shirt collars size 16 ½
PHOTO: TOM MCINVAILLE

JILL BAKER GOWER

The palace meets DIY in *Pink Roller Necklace*, even though Gower's craftsmanship is arguably too refined to belong to that movement. But it has some of DIY's fast-footed, throwaway approach to materials, aesthetics, and style. (Just imagine it around the neck of John Waters, clad in a scarlet full-length ball gown.) Gower is fascinated by patterned wallpaper, lace, crochet, overelaborate jewelry, and metalwork of the Renaissance, Victorian, and Baroque periods, but in particular silver toiletry and makeup items. *Flesh Collar*, with just a whiff of cannibalism in its title and its rubbery skin embedded with faux gems, is an uneasy, fetishistic work. For Gower, it is a way of "addressing body alteration obsessions and techniques popular in society today."

JILL BAKER GOWER
Flesh Collar #1, 2007
silicone rubber, monofilament, silver, cubic zirconium, glass buttons, silk cord
10 x 10 x ¼"

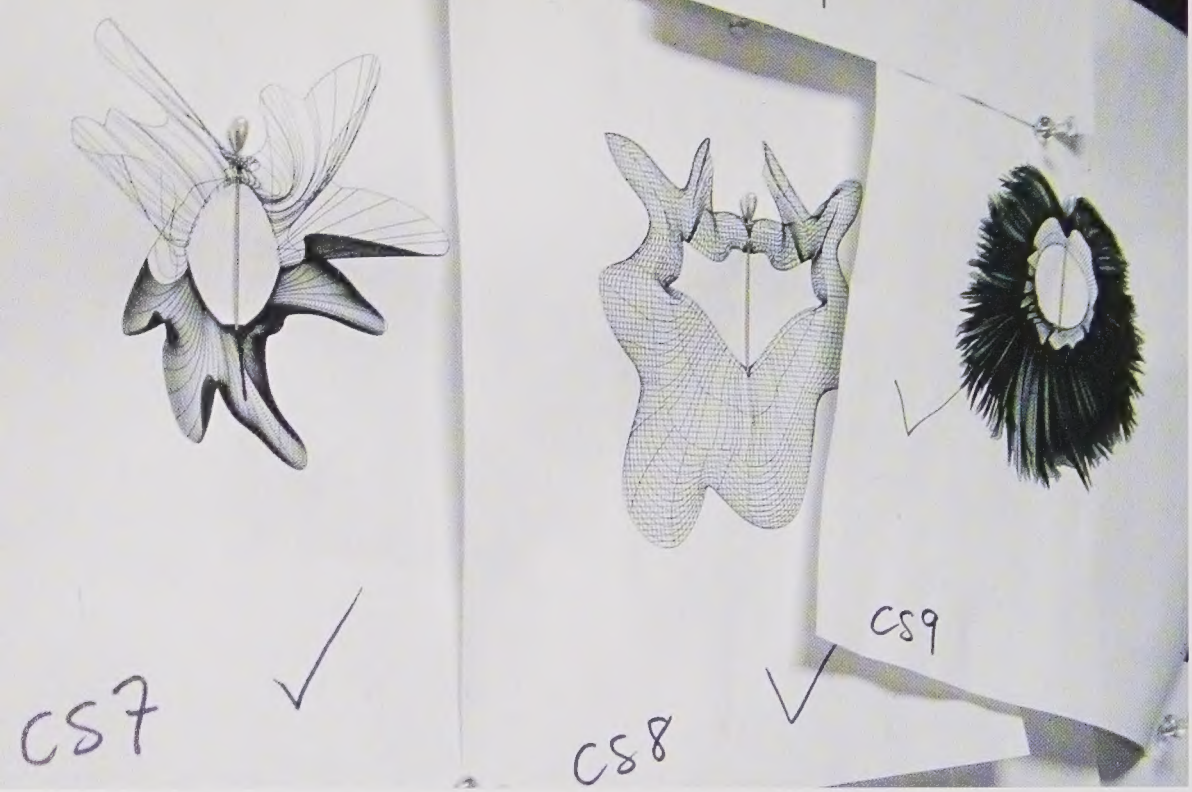
JILL BAKER GOWER
Pink Roller Necklace, 2008
sterling silver, foam hair rollers
8 x 8 x 1 ¼"

SHANA ASTRACHAN
Green, 2009
recycled plastic (toy parts, pearls, box), donated crystals, sterling silver
18 x 9"
PHOTO: CHRISTINE DHEIN & EMIKO OYE

SHANA ASTRACHAN

A DIY aesthetic also feeds this work, but with the authority of accomplished jewelry. At first glance the necklace is certainly palace-worthy, with its giant pearls, lavish styling, and bejeweled clasp, but upon closer inspection it has, aside from a small amount of silver, no intrinsic worth. It is made from plastic and enlists 90 percent recycled materials, as the name (and color) suggests. Astrachan seeks materials outside the context of traditional jewelry, and experiments with unconventional approaches in working with them.

At first glance the necklace is certainly palace-worthy... but upon closer inspection it has, aside from a small amount of silver, no intrinsic worth.



REBECCA STRZELEC
Sketches for "Army Green Orchids" series, 2006
inkjet print on paper
8 ½ x 11"

REBECCA STRZELEC

"Army Green Orchids" is a series of 18 brooches that redefine the corsage, inspired by early botanical illustrations. The corsage has been devalued with "the onset of overnight delivery. Flowers are ordered, not picked, they are tinted, dipped, glued, sliced, and submerged in a long list of preservatives," Strzelec argues. "Our society has created the mass produced flower." But in this exhibition I see flowers in a different context: as military honors, then as expensive medals, that the aristocracy was so fond of awarding each other. Given the ubiquitous olive color (the artist links it to the cheap plastic figures of soldiers sold in bags by the millions), it's striking just how lavish and transformative the addition of an everyday corsage pin with pearl becomes. The "precious flower," the orchid, honors the preciousness of life, with approximately 36,000 American soldiers (and hundreds of thousands of local civilians) killed or wounded to date in the Iraq War. Strzelec suggests that, just as we have created mass produced orchids, shipped internationally, expendable, replaceable, we have done the same with soldiers.

REBECCA STRZELEC
Cross Section #6, from "Army Green Orchids" series, 2006
fused deposition modeled ABS plastic, corsage pin
4 ½ x 4 x ¾"
PHOTO: DOUG YAPLE

ANYA KIVARKIS

The inherent perversity in Kivarkis's "Blind Spot" series, to which her *Brooch* belongs, is much like painting a major piece of jewelry white. The hierarchy of materials—gemstones, gold—disappears. Hand fabricated in silver and coated with industrial auto paint, Kivarkis dissolves "the ornament and precious material with a modern, hygienic, white surface," leaving only a plain form, an egalitarianism that gives every part of the brooch's shape equal value. She references historical sketches by Baroque jewelry designers of works that are no longer extant (Gilles Legare in this case), giving her jewelry an archival quality. In the most recent body of work, "Vanishing Point," Kivarkis works from paparazzi photos of celebrities on the red carpet at the Academy Awards (what passes for royalty in America). This is the perfect venue for Kivarkis to exercise her fascination with those moments when "aesthetic cultures of excess and luxury resurge within fashion." The jewelry in these photographs (most often borrowed by the star for the occasion) is often tiny and blurred, given to "visual obstructions" she incorporates into her art, as in an 2008 earring, which is depicted without detail.

ANYA KIVARKIS
Brooch, 2007
(Gilles Legare sketch, c. 1640)
fine and sterling silver,
14k palladium white gold,
enamel auto paint
2 ½ x 1 ¼ x ⅜"

ANYA KIVARKIS
Rebecca Miller Earrings
(Academy Awards), 2008
silver, white gold, auto paint
2 ½ x 1 ¼ x ⅜"

CHRIS IRICK
Whittle's Daisy Chain, 2008
sterling silver,
14k yellow gold
12 x 10 x 1"

CHRIS IRICK

Playing with simple poster board models of turbine blades resulted in *Whittle's Daisy Chain*. It is named after Sir Frank Whittle, inventor of the jet engine, and is one of several pieces in Irick's complex, immaculately engineered "Flight" series, based on early attempts at aviation. One might ask, "Where does that connect to the palace?" It is in Irick's ability to transform engineering into opulence. As Irick explains, "These elemental forms shift the focus away from the industrial towards the decorative." *Whittle's Daisy Chain* evokes the ceremonial collar chain that might have been worn over a cloak by a lord in a formal procession. The jewelry would not just be adornment but would also function as a badge of office, denoting the wearer's rank and role in the court. The repeated decorative motif, turbine blades simplified and rendered in gold, has a beauty and elegance that is surprisingly formal.

Photograph taken by the artist of a turbo fan, Science Museum, London

ELLIOT GASKIN

Just as with Chris Irick's "Flight" series, Gaskin's necklace is a blend of meticulous engineering and futuristic art. It has a similar quality to Santiago Calatrava's structures, conveying the Spanish architect-engineer-sculptor's ability to levitate form through pulleys, cables, and other types of suspension. Inspired by early machinery, Gaskin creates works (not all jewelry) that challenge the viewer's often fixed perceptions about modern-day mechanical devices, transforming them into objects of beauty and desire. What I found uplifting (no pun intended) was the regal extravagance of the work, its soaring presence, transparency, and suggestion of ritual, as though it is to be worn to a social event of exceptional importance and stylistic edge. It bridges two worlds: the futuristic, with its sci-fi resonances, and the past, with its era of pomp and circumstance.

20 Pulleys Necklace, 2009 (rear view)

It bridges two worlds: the futuristic, with its sci-fi resonances, and the past, with its era of pomp and circumstance.

ELLIOT GASKIN
20 Pulleys Necklace, 2009
silver, copper, brass, gold leaf, deer antler, silk string
12 x 21 x 11"

ASAGI MAEDA
A Trip to the Subconscious, 2009
(closed)

ASAGI MAEDA

Maeda has created an epic necklace for the work's scale, with its voluptuous physical presence and its narrative breadth; it recalls the storytelling of baroque jewelry. She describes *A Trip to the Subconscious* as a picture book based on a dream. The story is engraved and enameled on the back and side of the piece beginning with the clasp, which sits on the left collarbone, and continues to the left. "It's about a city in the dream," Maeda explains, "and I've made this necklace through the main character's eye, myself, having been shrunk to a tiny person, who then sets to explore a big desolate city that nobody lives in." Despite its bulk, it is highly wearable and has a second life as an independent objet d' art when folded up, shrinking into a compact cityscape.

ASAGI MAEDA
A Trip to the Subconscious, 2009
sterling silver, 18k gold, enamel, quartz, avonite, plastic
PHOTOS: KOICHIRO SHIKI

RENÉ LALIQUE
Necklace with Insect Women and Black Swans, 1900
gold, enamel, opals, amethysts
diameter 9 ½"
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

EMIKO OYE

When I opened oye's submission, I could not help but laugh out loud. There was the essence of "Neo Palatial," comic with its witty pomposity, the powdered face, the eighteenth-century wig, and her outlandish, parodic view of trophy jewelry. The series titled "My First Royal Jewels" clinched the deal. Oye pursues modern-day reinterpretations of jewelry by some of the great design houses—Louis Boucheron, René Lalique, Cartier, and Harry Winston, purveyors of body ornamentation to the royals and the social elite. Her take on Lalique's necklace (above) is funky and irreverent; her choice of LEGOS to reinvent these works is sly. It refers to the mobility of gemstones, components, like LEGOS, that move from one setting to another. Oye believes that "value can often be informed by nostalgia, so the child in you may find as much preciousness in plastic components as gemstones and platinum."

EMIKO OYE
Cygne Noir, 2009
repurposed LEGO, rubber cord, sterling silver
24 x 5 x 3 ½"

MARIE PENDARIÈS

MARIE PENDARIÈS
La Dot (The Dowry), 2008
porcelain, 26 pieces

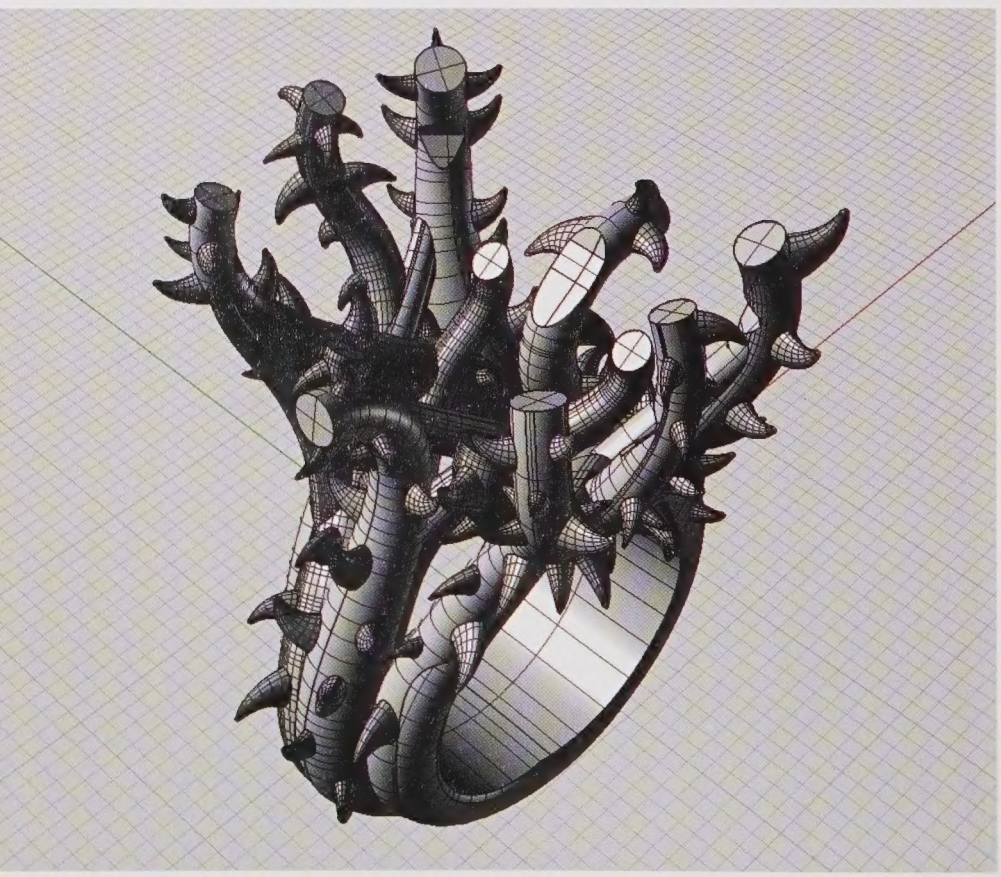
The wedding gown often indicates the conclusion of a fashion show. In this context it is the penultimate work, shown on a mannequin painted black. *La Dot* (The Dowry) belongs to the "Les Quotidiennes" (Everyday Life) series by Pendariès, pieces that make reference to the hearth as a meeting point around fire and food. In this transformation she sought to "let the body go through the dishes so that the dinner set becomes jewel." The choice of porcelain contributed resonances that earthenware or stoneware do not possess. Europe discovered the formula for hard-paste porcelain in the early eighteenth century. The first manufactories were founded or acquired by kings and queens, including Augustus II of Saxony (Meissen, the first, 1709); Louis XV (Sevres Manufacture Royale de la Porcelaine de France, established in Vincennes in 1738 and acquired by the king in 1751); Queen Juliane Marie of Denmark (Royal Copenhagen Porcelain, 1775); and Empress Elizabeth of Russia (Imperial Porcelain Factory, founded 1774).

In this transformation she sought to "let the body go through the dishes so that the dinner set becomes jewel."

TOMEK OGRODOWSKI

The last jewel in the cabinet is a ring with thorns that has something of a Marquis de Sade quality, painful to the wearer, the perfect gift from sadist to masochist. It dances on a small computer screen, twisting and floating in space. Could this be the most extravagant gesture of all? Will we one day buy a ring purely as a conceptual digital work? Is this the most liberated of jewelry, free of craft, free of wearability, with access to any metals or jewels regardless of cost? This was not Ogrodowski's purpose when he turned to computer-aided design in 2003, and since then 200 of his designs have been manufactured. But Ogrodowski acknowledges that the design freedoms the computer offers are beginning to outpace the skills of even the most accomplished masters.

TOMEK OGRODOWSKI
Initial sketch for *Passion*



TOMEK OGRODOWSKI
Passion, 2010
gold ring, sapphire
designed in Rhinoceros 4.0
rendered in Brazil 2
1 5/8 x 7/8 x 5/8"

Colonnade of Vases

THE NOTION OF the Grand Vase is what led to the idea for the theme of this exhibition. It determined the palace as my location and drew on my lifetime of enjoying and analyzing vessel forms. In the eighteenth century, these huge vases were made as centerpieces for entry halls, parlors, or ornamental gardens. In the nineteenth century, when private commissions were less common, they were brought back into vogue by the World's Fair. The "exposition vase," as it became known, was designed to awe with its huge scale and fulsome virtuosity.

As I began my research, a French vessel became my muse: a nine-foot untitled Symbolist vase by Jean-Désiré Ringel d'Illzach (France 1847–1916) recently acquired by the Getty Museum. The vase form draws directly from a bronze volute krater from Pompeii that Ringel d'Illzach saw and sketched during a visit. The surface is remarkable, including life casts of spiders, juniper branches, scraps of lace, peacock feathers, and proto-Art Nouveau ornament.

This Getty vase was made for the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris. Unsold, it then made appearances at the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, and the 1910 Universal Exposition in Brussels. It remained in the hands of the Belgian bronze casting firm Compagnie des Bronzes de Bruxelles until 1970, when they closed and a private collector purchased the piece.

JEAN-DÉSIRÉ RINGEL D'ILLZACH
(French, 1849–1916)
Vase monumental, 1889
bronze and copper
107 ½ x 40 9/16"
COLLECTION GETTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

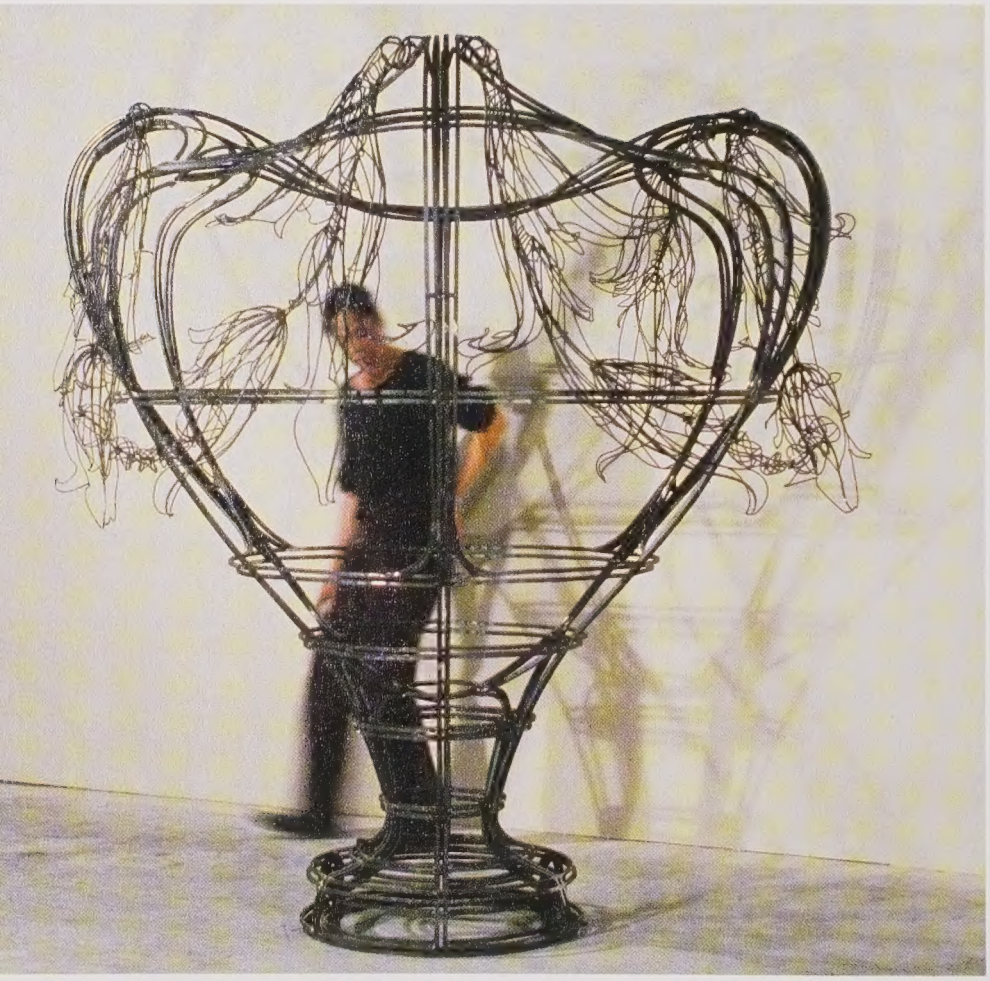
KIM CRIDLER

In this story of mercantile disappointment lies the reason why my search for Grand Vases eventually proved fruitless, with the exception of Kim Cridler's exciting work. Vases are costly to make and store, and they cost a fortune to ship, so unless they are commissioned most artists will not risk making them.

A selection of Cridler's works is exhibited in an outdoor colonnade, one vase standing between each column. In the center of the colonnade there is a shallow reflection pool that appears to double the number of vases on show.

The notion of the Grand Vase is what led to the idea for the theme of this exhibition. It determined the palace as my location and drew on my lifetime of enjoying and analyzing vessel forms.

KIM CRIDLER
Untitled Vessel, 1997
steel, gut
84 x 96"



KIM CRIDLER
Urns With Bees, 2009
steel, cast bronze
35 x 70"

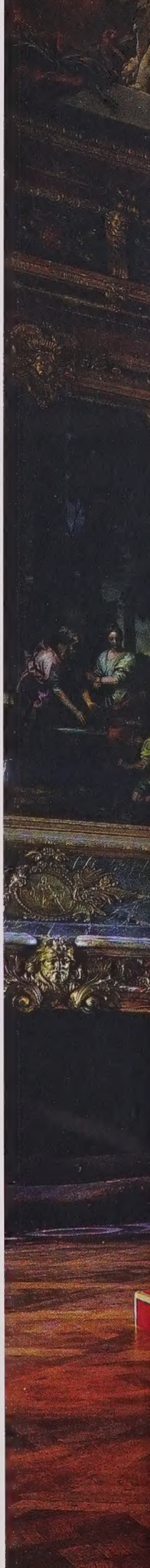
The Versailles Room

THE TOUR ENDS as it began, at the Palace of Versailles. Inside a former arboretum, a medium-sized cube has been built. Walls are painted dark maroon with gold moldings. Six gilded Louis XVI-style armchairs are scattered in the room, each glowing under a tiny pin spot, the effect made more jewel-like by the synthetic, metallic, and hot-pink upholstery. The chairs face a giant back-projection screen. Huge images fade in and out of Jeff Koons's controversial 2008 installation in Versailles. A woman in eighteenth-century court drag sits at the harpsichord in one corner, softly playing "C'est mon ami," a composition by Marie Antoinette.

On the screen is a match made in heaven: art by the contemporary kitsch-meister of Pop art shown in the world's most histrionic example of kitsch architecture. Some of Koons's work could pass for being period; his portrait of Louis XIV in stainless steel, or a white marble *Self-Portrait* bust. But it is his sculptures based on balloon toys, notably *Balloon Dog (Magenta)* installed in the Salon d'Hercule, which dramatically fits this baroque confection like a glove.

The seeming banality of these pieces prompted conservative critics to argue that Koons's work belonged in Disneyland and not this "sacred" palace. The irony escaped them. Koons in Versailles demonstrates the negligible line between this historic home and Disneyland; both are an exercise in fantasy, just for different classes and at different times. Insofar as this exhibition is a critique by Koons, it is only one of taste and aesthetics. He is too implicated, as much an aristocrat of today's palace establishment as Louis XVI was in his time. Koons briefly held the record for the highest price paid for a work by a living artist when his *Hanging Heart* (1994–96) sold at auction in 2007 for $23.6 million. The connection between wealth and ambitious art has been with us for millennia, and navigating the dichotomies between art, wealth, and power will always be as perilous as they are inevitable.

The chateau's director, Jean Jacques Aillagon, dealt with the critics perfectly when he pointed out that Versailles is a living place that "deserves respect but not blind devotion, a laboratory for tastes and not something frozen in formaldehyde." Certainly, deep respect belongs to the ingenious craftsmen, artists, architects, and designers who built this astonishing work. But its residents remain the natural prey and satiric fodder of the socially conscious arts. It is not a direction that all artists comfortably follow, nor that all collectors can appreciate. There is a concern that participation in this aesthetic equals complicity in its politics. This is too literal a view. As the noted film critic Pauline Kael once said to me, "Art is amoral." It goes where it finds stimulation and embraces anything that nourishes its muses, whether that be a tyrant's baubles or a saint's halo. As such, sumptuousness can be an antidote to the clinical oft-sanctimonious austerity of modernism's more fundamentalist strains. The palace is a place that appeals to the voyeur in all of us. Love it or hate it, we all want to peek over the walls.



JEFF KOONS
Balloon Dog (Magenta), 1994–2000
high chromium stainless steel, transparent coating
121 x 143 x 45"
Installation from "Jeff Koons, Versailles," at Château de Versailles, France, September 10–December 14, 2008

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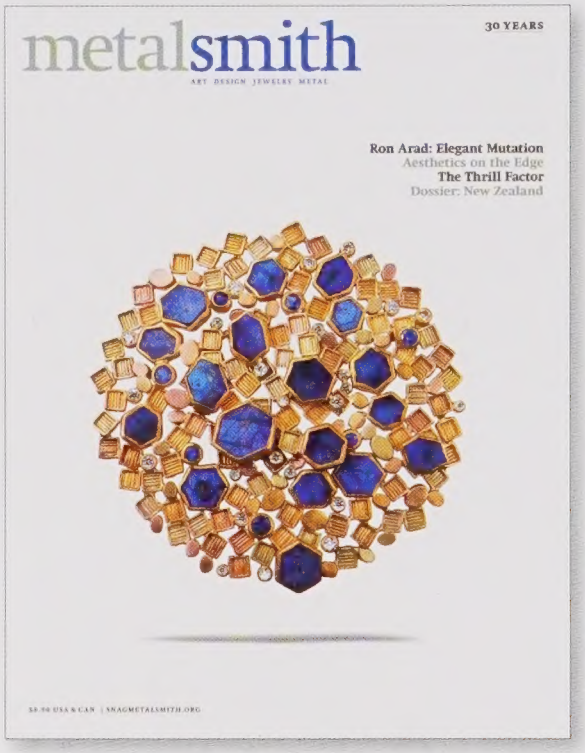
BY DANA SINGER

SNAG is Proud Sponsor of American Craft Week

SNAG has signed on as a major sponsor of American Craft Week, October 1–10, 2010, joining other prime sponsors—The American Craft Council, New York International Gift Fair, The Artful Home, WholesaleCrafts.com, *American Style*, and *Ornament*. American Craft Week is the brainchild of Craft in America and the Craft Retailers and Artists for Tomorrow.

Across the country, makers, sellers, instructors, guilds and others will present local events such as art walks, studio tours, fairs and exhibitions showing handmade craft. Many SNAG members will be participating, among them Minneapolis members Emily C. Johnson and Britta Kauppila holding a "Show and Sell" open studio in the Northrup King Building.



Cover of Metalsmith *issue 30:2*

Rock Hushka giving a SNAG-sponsored talk at SOFA NY.

Metalsmith Receives Award for Redesign

From more than 5,000 submissions in the Society of Publication Designers' 45th Annual Competition, the editorial redesign of *Metalsmith* in 2009 by Luke Hayman at Pentagram Design was named as a Merit Winner. The Society's competition recognized the best work created and printed in the 2009 editorial year.

New Hoover & Strong Scholarship

Hoover & Strong, a manufacturer and refiner of 100 percent recycled precious metals, and a supplier to metalsmiths, large jewelry manufacturers, diamond houses and distributors, has created a new $3,000 student scholarship that will be administered through SNAG's Educational Endowment Trust starting in 2011. Named The Hoover & Strong Scholarship, it will be awarded each year to one graduate student creating high-quality production work.

SNAG and Art Jewelry Forum Partner at SNAG New York

Rock Hushka presented his lecture, "Holding Objects: What It Means to Wear Jewelry–The Psychoanalytic Mechanisms," co-sponsored by SNAG and the Art Jewelry Forum, as part of the Salon Series at SOFA New York in April. Using core psychoanalytic concepts, Hushka explored jewelry's emotional and cultural appeal, and the unspoken messages inherent in studio art jewelry. Hushka is the Curator of Contemporary and Northwest Art at the Tacoma Art Museum. His lecture can be found on the Art Jewelry Forum website, www.artjewelryforum.org, and an article by Hushka on a related topic will appear in the fall 2010 issue of *Metalsmith*, published in October.

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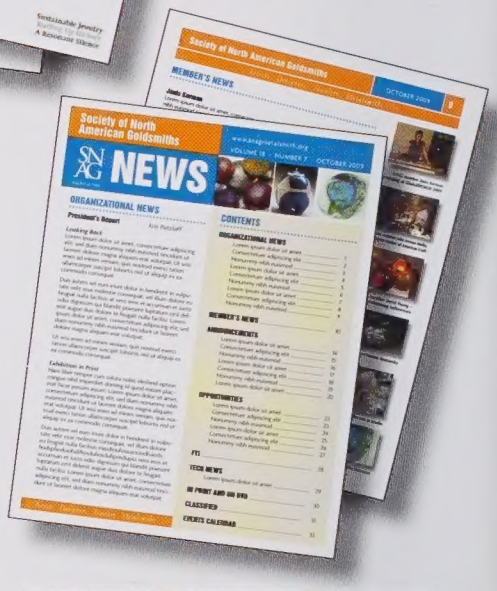

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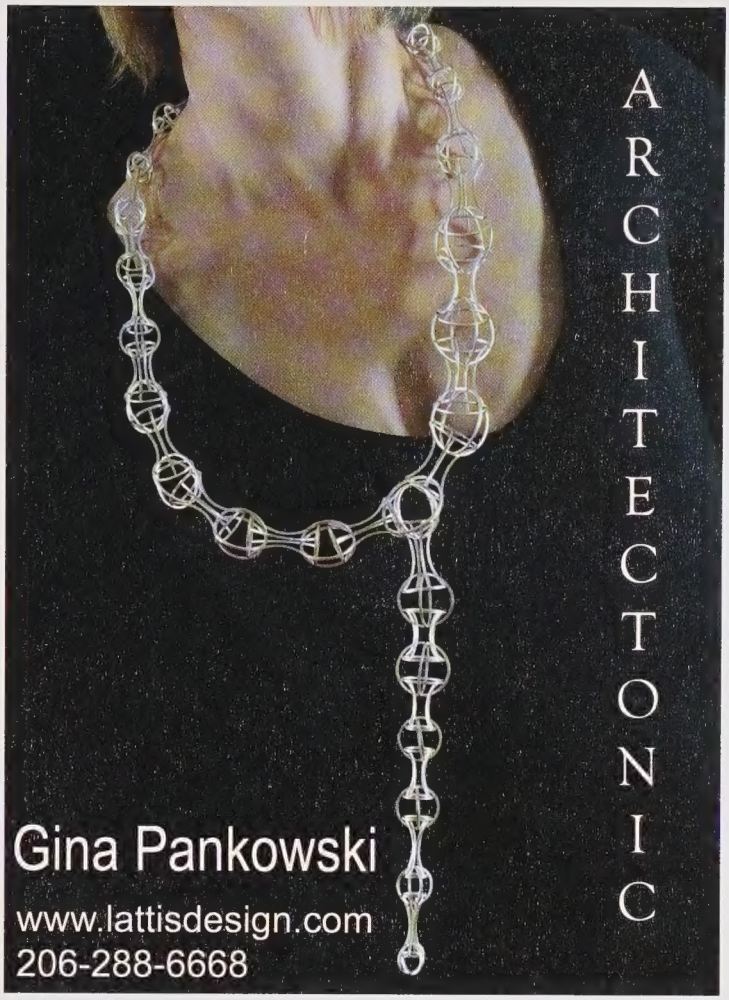

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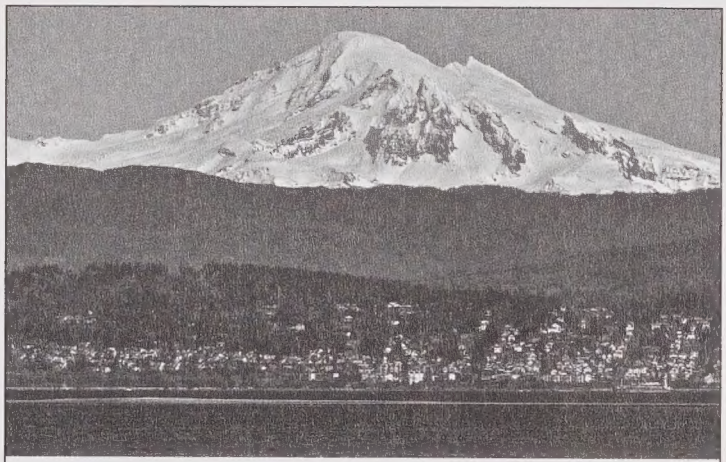

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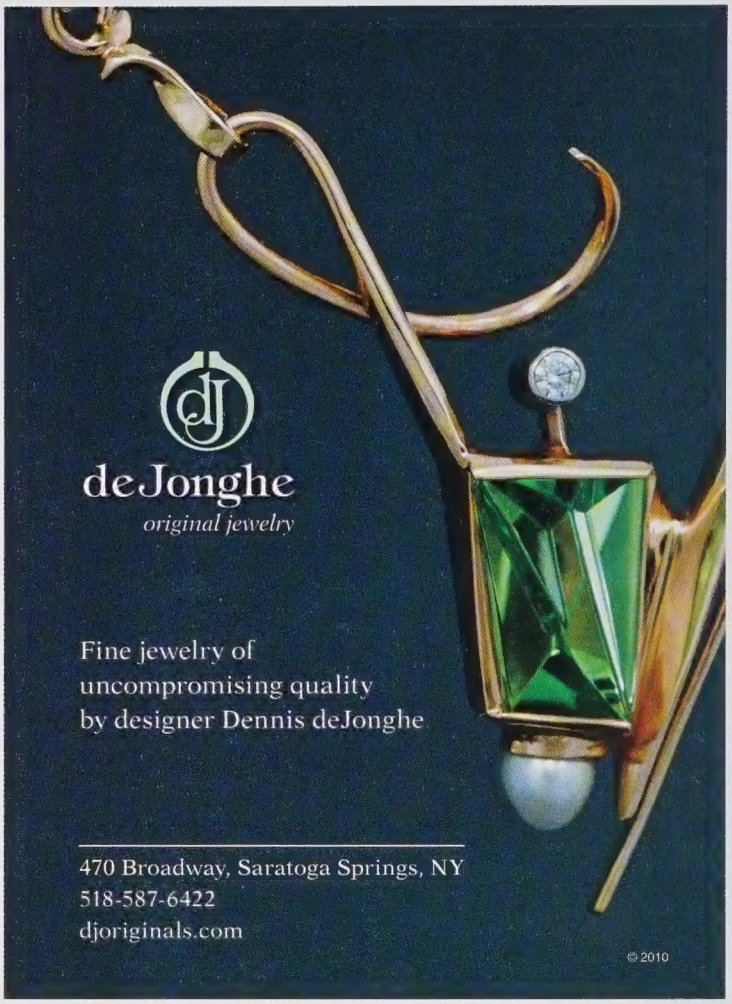

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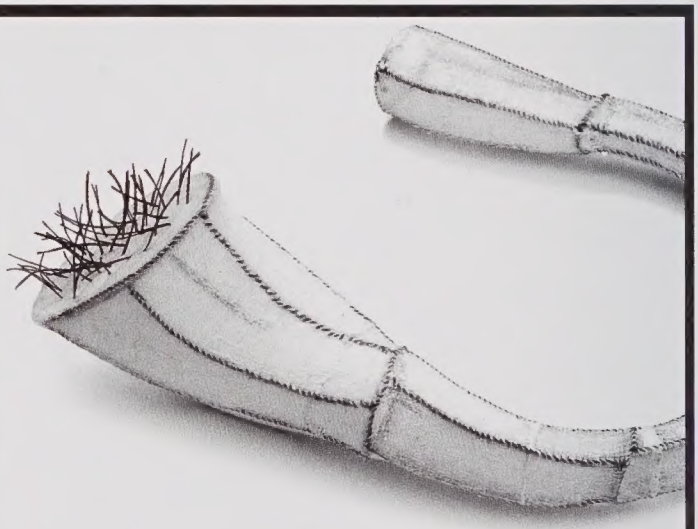

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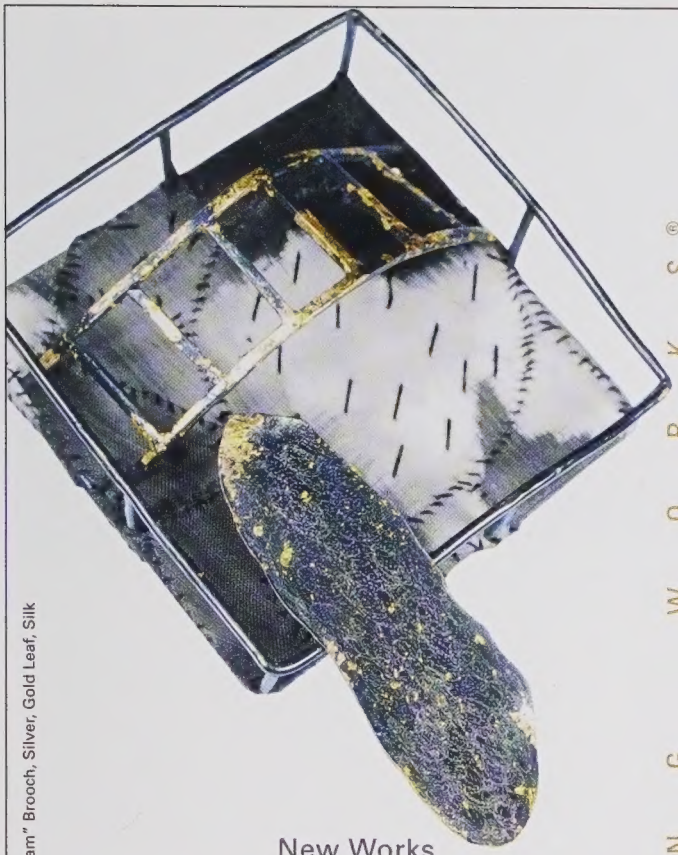

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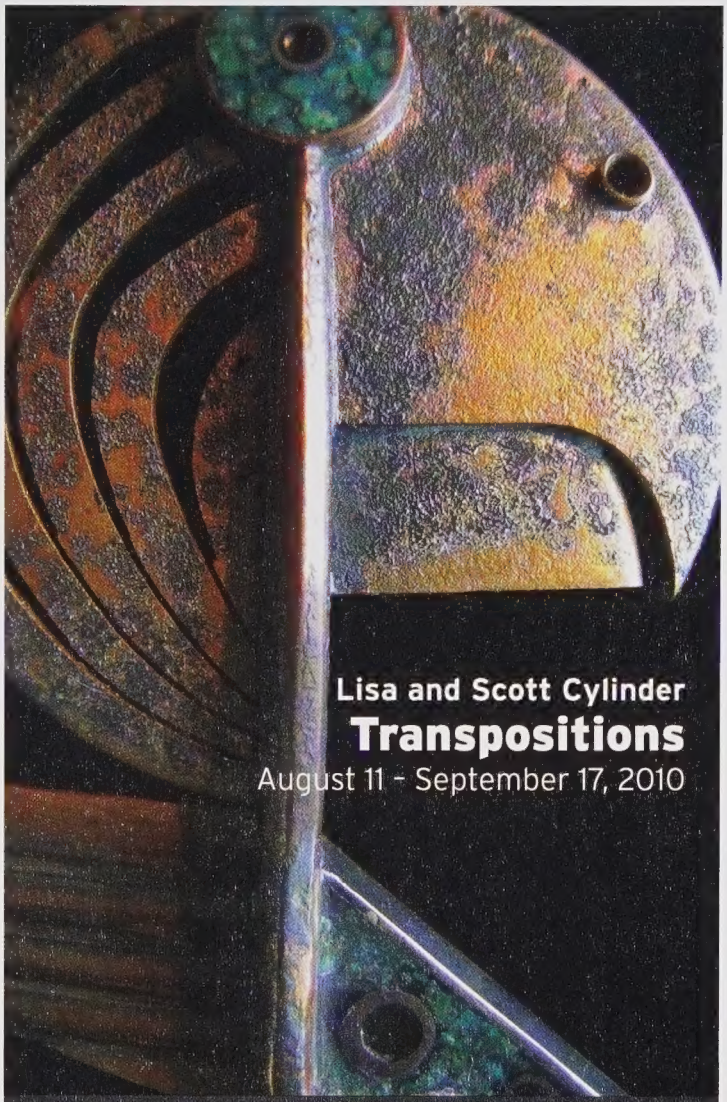

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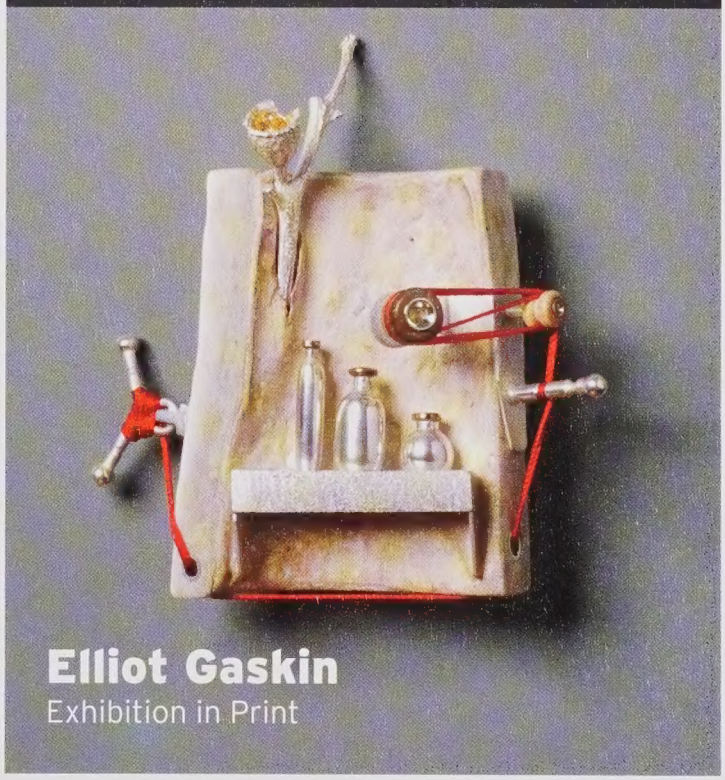

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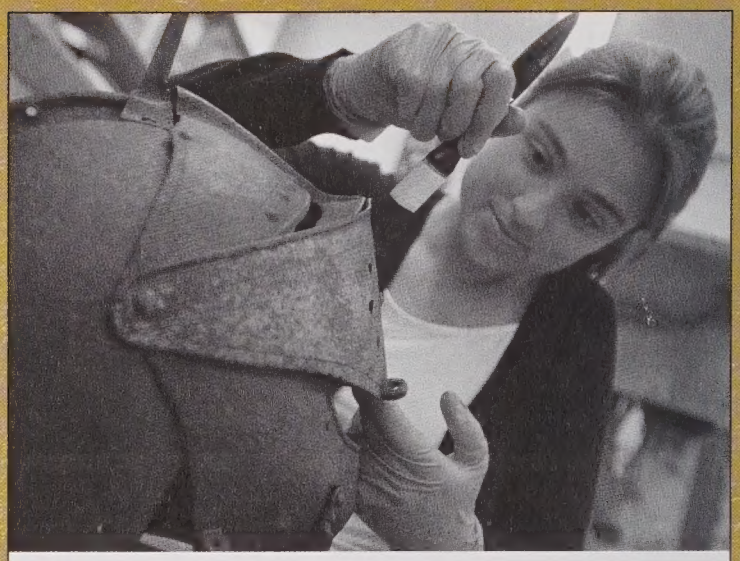

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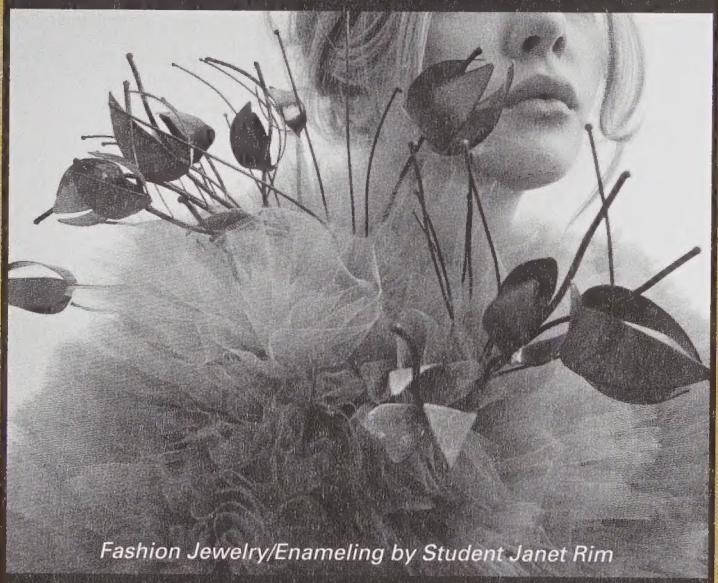

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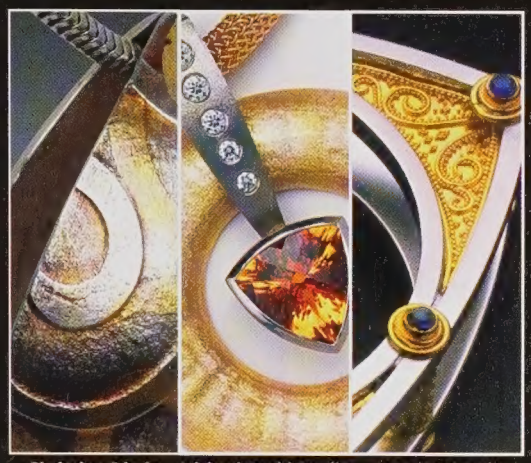

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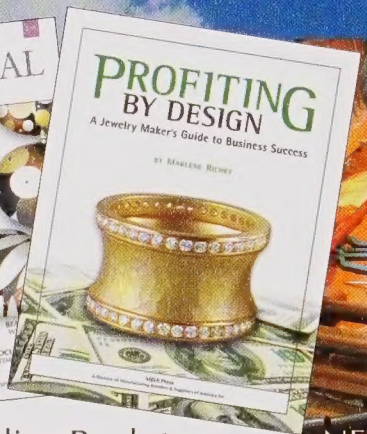

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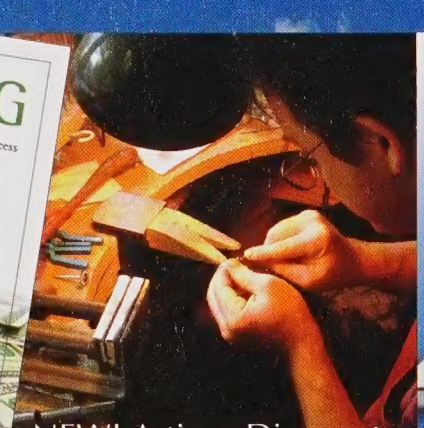

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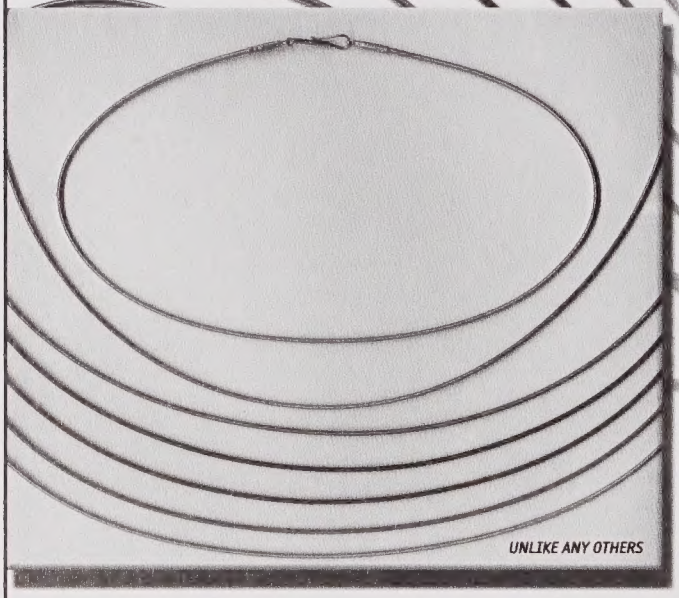

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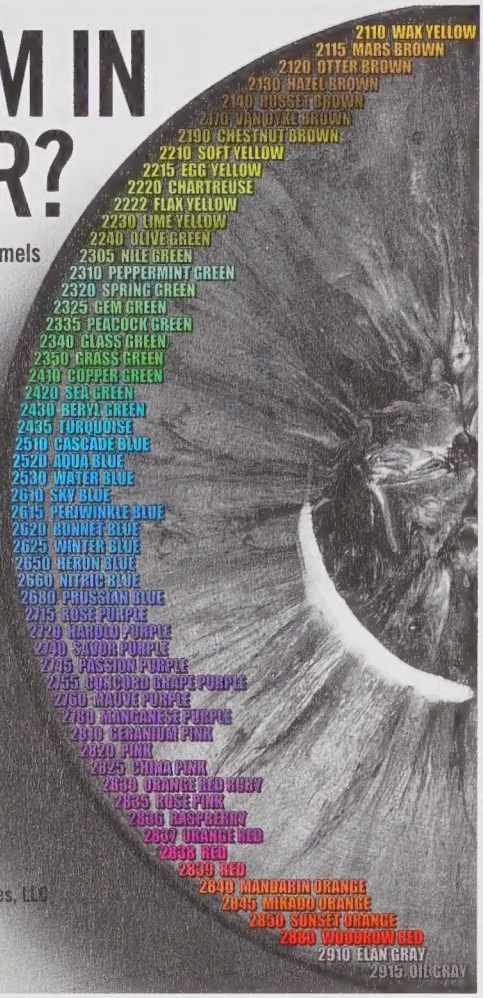

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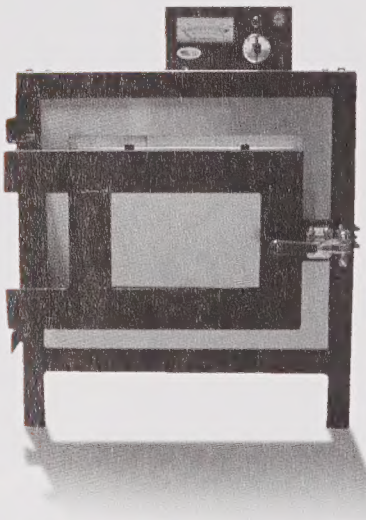

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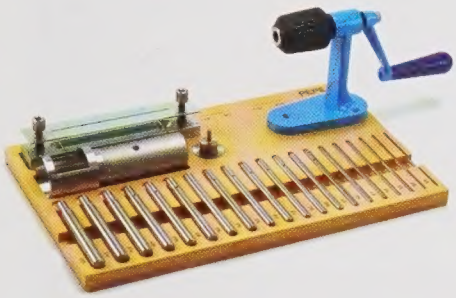

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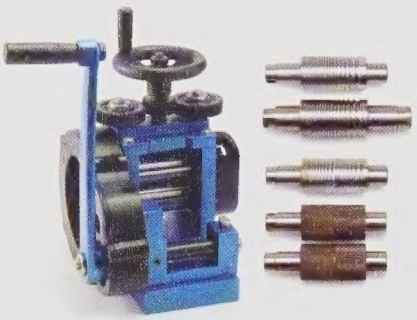

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metalsmith index of advertisers vol. 30 no. 4

Academy of Art 69
American Craft Week 8
Arrowmont School of Arts & Crafts 68
Auto Trac, Inc. 79
Beverly Tadeu Studio 64
Billanti Casting Co., Inc. 73
Charon Kransen 63
Chris's Cables 74
Coenraad Zielstra Goldsmith 65
Contempory Jewelry Design Group 2
Creative Metalworks School of Design 68
David H. Fell 74
Davide Bigazzi Studio 70
Dennis de Jonghe 66
Downeast Trading Co. 80
Elise Bergeron Jewellery 65
Facere Jewelry Art Gallery 66
Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h Bijoux D'Art 64
Gallery Loupe 7
Gem & Lapidary Wholesalers 73
Gemological Institute of America 71
Gina Pankowski 65
Gloria Askin 64
Green Jewelry News 70
Hauser & Miller 73
J. Cotter Gallery 66
Jewelry Arts Institute 70
Kendall College of Art & Design 71
Kristin Diener 65
Larry Paul Casting 76
LNH Studio 64
Marlborough Gallery ..... Cover
Mendocino Art Center 70
Metalsmith 73, 79
MJSA 72
Mobilla Gallery 5
Myron Toback, Inc. 78
National Jewelers Supplies 75
Ornamentum 3
Otto Frei 77
Ox Bow 69
Patina Gallery 67
Penland School of Craft 69
Quirk Gallery 66
R.W. Manufacturing 75
Reactive Metals Studio 76
Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts 71
Rio Grande ..... Cover
Schlaifer Enameling Supplies 75
Sienna Gallery 1
SOFA Chicago 9
Studio Jewelers, Ltd. 68
Stuller ..... Cover
Thompson Enamel 76
United Precious Metal Refining 79
Vcella Kilns, Inc. 76
Velvet da Vinci 67
Webvertising Index 79
West Dean 68

metalsmith+SNAG Website+SNAG News index of webvertisers

These advertisers are also available through live links on SNAG's website and live links inside each issue of the digital SNAG News.

Arrowmont School of Arts & Crafts	www.arrowmont.org	68
Beverly Tadeu Studio	www.BeverlyTadeu.com	64
Coenraad Zielstra Goldsmith	www.coenraadzielstra.com	65
Contemporary Jewelry Design Group	www.cdgjewelers.com	2
Creative Metalworks School of Design	www.creativemetalworks.com	68
Elise Bergeron Jewellery	www.elisebergeron.com	65
David H. Fell	www.dhfco.com	74
Downeast Trading	www.downeasttrading.com	80
Galerie Noel Guyomarc'h Bijoux D'Art	www.galerienoelguyomarch.com	64
Gemological Institute of America	www.gia.edu	71
Gina Pankowski	www.lattisdesign.com	65
Gloria Askin	www.gloriaaskin.com	64
Hauser & Miller	www.hauserandmiller.com	73
J. Cotter Gallery	www.jcottergallery.com	66
Kendall College of Art & Design	www.kcad.edu	71
Mendocino Art Center	www.mendocinoartcenter.org	70
Myron Toback, Inc.	www.myrontoback.com	78
National Jewelers Supplies	www.nationaljewelerssupplies.com	79
Patina Gallery	www.patina-gallery.com	67
R.W. Manufacturing	www.rwmfg.com/info	75
Revere Academy of Art	www.RevereAcademy.com	71
Rio Grande	www.riogrande.com	Cover
Sienna Gallery	www.siennagallery.com	1
Stuller	www.stuller.com	Cover
Thompson Enamel	www.thompsonenamel.com	76
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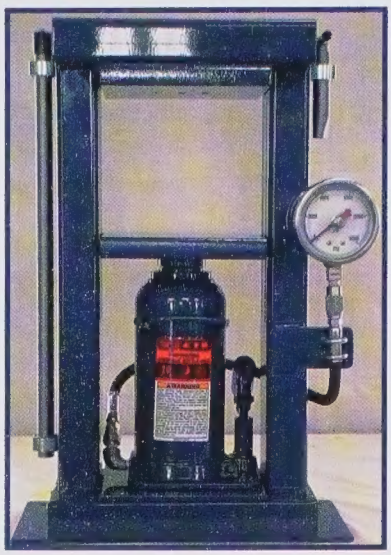

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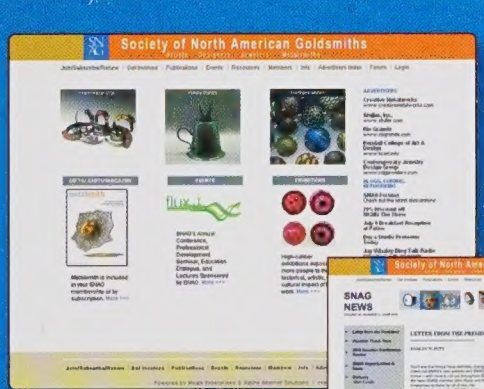

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